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*In memory of Zygmunt Seręga,  
Our teacher and friend*

## **Think Locally and Act Globally: Understanding Human Development in the Era of Globalisation\***

### **Abstract**

For well over two decades the phrase “Think Global, Act Local” shaped the rhetoric used by social movements, environmental activists and intellectuals critical of the neoliberal narrative of globalisation. The intention was to obtain ideas and solutions elaborated in various parts of the world implemented in local communities and to give special meaning to progressive proposals of international social movement contesting globalisation. This approach could certainly be beneficial in terms of the diffusion of good environmental practices or spreading civil society ideas in developing countries.

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However, when global ideas reach local ground, they remain global ideas, and sometimes very foreign ones, which may take over or eclipse local concepts in unintended or less-than-ideal ways. Occasionally, this approach could even lead to overpowering what is local instead of empowering it. Therefore, having the empowerment of local communities in mind, we propose that those who really contest globalisation of the neoliberal narrative should turn the tables and work to “Think Locally, Act Globally.”

Thinking locally and acting globally helps to ensure that adequate attention will be paid to local needs and local ideas. Presently, no local community exists outside of the global context and its influences, which affects the writings of contemporary sociologists who tend to emphasise the concept of “place” when analysing local communities. The nature of bonds on the local level changes in the globalised world, as local communities become more goal-oriented, utilising the functional proximity of people and other assets of the community. These new types of communities emerge even in places previously recognised as being shaped by local customs and traditions.

These changes can be seen in the rural, semi-rural and small-town communities of Zalipie and Dąbrowa Tarnowska in Małopolska, as well as Radzionków in Silesia and in the nationwide study of rural communities in Poland. Their potential as the communities of the new type can be recognised as matching with neo-endogenous and sustainable development concepts.

**Keywords:** globalisation, glocality, place, local community of the new type, neo-endogenous development, sustainable development

## Introduction

The title of the following paper is purposely tricky. At first glance, it may suggest a misquotation of the popular slogan frequently used by environmentalists and eco-activists to present the essence and logic of how the globalised world ought to function. In his recent paper, Julian Amey (2013) from University of Warwick in Great Britain states the following: “The phrase ‘Think Global, Act Local’ was first used in the context of environmental challenges – in order to improve our impact on the environment; it is more effective for an individual to reduce their own energy consumption than wait for global action. What about the context of *big* business? Big companies such as McDonalds and Honda are successful

on a global scale, while their products were tailored to the requirements of individual countries". Furthermore, in his article, the author points out that the phrase "think globally and act locally" needs to be supplemented with "share your knowledge and be part of a network" for an adequate consideration of the larger picture. The slogan – to put it simply – means that a real contribution to the life of a particular place and community defined as local can be achieved by taking up issues that connect with global matters. They are manifestations of more general problems, characteristic of various societies placed all over the world.

Let us take a closer look at examples of large transnational corporations entering local markets, as mentioned by Amey. The local action plans of these companies are nothing short of selling their "global" products in "packaging" that may appeal to the preferences of local consumers or fulfil their needs which have been shaped by local context and local traditions. The other example, alluding to environmental protection and ecological values indicates that local communities are expected to forego the fulfilment of their own needs without any reassurances that global action will be taken on their behalf. Not surprisingly this kind of logic has had harsh opponents (Amey 2013), who accused this approach as being an enactment of "think globally and act globally." In the era of globalisation, the fact the local matters – in their opinion – has been completely erased.

The "Think Globally, Act Locally" slogan is currently used within the discourse on development, although it may seem problematic at times. Unreflective and uncritical applications of "think globally act locally" from the realm of ecological movements and their actions to the discourse on development, can become a threat to proper development of local systems in taking away from the empowerment of local actors and their ability to decide about their own future. Limiting the importance of local systems and the actions of local actors to mere tools for the implementation of a global idea casts individuals as merely dutiful performers and deprives them of any meaningful impact on their surrounding social reality.

It should be added here that, in several concepts and approaches to development, local systems and arrangements were assigned such roles. In some situations the very concept of sustainable development is a carrier of such ideas, even though it often refers to effusively defined sustainable communities. It may be presented as a development project of technocrats with its global millennial goals, achievement of ratings and indexes and



implementation of various legal rules but without the full and factual participation of the community. Therefore, it is necessary to re-empower the local communities and to increase their participation, not only in the implementation of change but also in planning the change and even the decision-making process regarding the perceived need for change and its direction.

Undoubtedly, change and development are not possible without the involvement of local systems and arrangements. The character of participation, which means the engagements of local systems and deals may be quite diverse. Hickey and Mohan (2004) note that the term ‘participation’ has become, in contemporary discourse on social development, a code word that often just opens the door to tyranny. Real participation is not limited to actions and activities planned by somebody else. Hence, participation in development should encompass all stages of the process of change and all of its actors.

In our view, when dealing with actions, one should not ignore or forget the actors engaged in them. In the language of sociology, an actor is an individual who is consciously taking up certain activities, and not just passively reacting to external stimuli. This issue ties in with a more general concept of the empowerment and agency of the actor. We are certain that issues of empowerment should be one of the key questions in the discourse on development (this is present in many concepts of so-called “alternative development” – see for example, Pieterse 2010, Chambers 1997, 2005, Klekotko 2012 etc).

In the following work, we would like to reflect thoroughly on the relationship between local and global in reference to the statement “Think globally, act locally.” In our opinion this statement contains the hidden assumption of the domination of the global over the local. What is local presents itself as an implementation of a certain global project, but only in certain ways tailored to the local needs. Here, critics would say that it is done in a very questionable way, if it is done at all.

We would agree with this criticism. However, in our analysis we would like to go a little further and propose a reversed way of thinking through a play on words: “Think locally, act globally.” Justification for this message requires a closer look at the not-so-simple relations between the local and the global and the realisation that a complex development mechanism constitutes the core of the globalised world. In order to present this mech-



anism adequately, it is hence necessary to capture the new way of viewing the local in a society exposed to the globalisation processes. In this short essay, we hope to provide an adequate explanation of these matters.

### **On global-local relations**

The traditional outlook on local communities usually deals with certain ensembles of people as subjects settled within the framework of particular fragments of space. Here, the idea originates of connecting such communities with concrete fragments of the space; namely, with “places.” In concepts presenting traditional rural or urban communities, “the place” becomes the bedrock for a particular community and its boundaries are the same as boundaries of the “familiar” world, so different from everything else located “outside” and populated with “strangers.” However, the processes of modernisation loosen the relations between the local inhabitants understood as community and their “place” (Gorlach, 1990; 2004; Adamski, Gorlach, 2007).

Reinforcement of this tendency is caused by globalisation processes, which contribute to further deterioration of such relations, but do not necessarily decrease the role of the variety of values that mark the characteristics of particular “places”. However, such loosening causes these values and their manifestations, attributed to particular fragments of space known as “places” to become the focus of academic interest, controversies or negotiations between various actors for whom they still have significant meanings. In this way, particular fragments of geographic space are subjected to far more intense and thorough social construction than what could have been observed in the era of traditional societies or societies affected just by modernisation. This characteristic of the concept of place is the most significant and decisive (Wiborg, 2004).

This outlook allows for introduction of more elaborate concepts. One of them is the proposal of Harvey C. Perkins (2006) to apply a threefold perspective to analyse the places located in rural areas (spaces). Firstly, it has to do with identifying the place in the commodification perspective (Pakulski, 2009), which means that “rural places” are currently not just those fragments of space where food production takes place (or perhaps we should say production of “food crops” or “food staples”), but also where very specific “commodities,” such as the natural and cultural landscape of

the countryside, are consumed. The second dimension presents the diversity of this commodification considering that, in and of itself, it is a process of controversies and negotiations between various actors, who have to keep in mind various requirements concerning characteristics of particular "places". This leads us to the third perspective described by Perkins, which is related to researchers who currently, more than ever before, have to focus on construction or constant social reconstruction of particular places, while analysing the relationship between actors taking part in these processes.

Other authors add new elements to this way of thinking. Analysis of the impact of commodification and market relations gets infused with issues of political and social mobilisation (Woods, 2006: 437–471). From this perspective, the emphasis is placed on various local and, even more importantly, on supra-local factors which play a significant role in constructing meanings and identity connected with particular "places". A similar approach can be found in the writings of Polish authors (Lubaś, 2010) known for their concept of "social creation of places". This concept, clearly referring to Berger and Luckmann's (1971) idea of the "social construction of reality", contains several important statements. First of all, these authors define place as the fragment of space which is shaped by people – both individuals and communities – through their ideas, actions or organised social relations.

They then present a somewhat debatable thesis about the distinct value of the concept of place as opposed to the more traditional way of viewing local community. The latter is mostly associated with one scale of social order, while place is a subject of various influences located on other scales, i.e., national (state authority, power apparatus, administrative institutions) or global (transnational corporations, associations, and international organizations), etc.

It may appear that focus on issues of place leads to refutation of the notion of local, mostly within the context of globalisation. We, the authors of the following work, do not share such a radical viewpoint. On one hand, we are aware that in the era of global society, it is difficult to speak of the existence of local communities as enclaves, isolated from various aspects of social life. On the other hand, similarly to Giddens (1992), we assert that contemporary places (which are contemporary equivalents of what is traditionally understood as local) are shaped by various factors located mostly beyond their realm.



In this sense, the concept of place not so much refutes the concept of the local but gives it a more complex meaning which emphasises the quite specific role of supra-local factors. It is hence justifiable to say that the concept of place is a certain variation of the concept of local community, albeit more adapted to the framework of globalised society.

This perspective brings attention to the more concrete approaches related to the concept of place and makes academic analysis of the processes of place-making possible. Here, we mean the analysis of these actions that lead to the change of image of the particular society (encompassing city, town, region, village, or other types of territory). One of the authors embracing this perspective, Mark Shucksmith, situates “place” within the theory of network society. It is not about providing a framework for an oppressive state that imposes decisions and solutions.

Hence, the author describes generative state that facilitates arriving at solutions by subjects which influence each other while functioning within a certain network (Shucksmith 2010: 1–14). In this sense, a redesigned place is not viewed as an established structure, but as a social construction undergoing processes of constant shaping and redesign, which brings about a dispute among the participants of the afore-mentioned network.

A quite different approach can be seen in the writings of Australian sociologists (Vanclay et al. 2008). As Frank Vanclay (2008: 3) writes: “Place’ is generally conceived as being ‘space’ imbued with meaning. Thus, it refers more to the meanings that are invested in a location than to the physicality of the locality.”

Let us focus for a moment on the above definition. Here, we see a somewhat different take on the relations between “place” and the locality, namely, the local community. The difference here is that the concept of place is not proposed here as a contemporary substitute for the local community concept.

Instead, there are complementarities between these two concepts. On the one hand, what is local only represents a certain fragment of space. On the other hand, “place” is an assembly of meanings connected with the physical characteristics described above. This causes the concept of place to be a very broad, all-encompassing category, from which more narrow meanings can be derived.

These narrow meanings are connected with various types of narration applied to various physical characteristics that reflect locality. Moreover,



they can be employed by different ‘subtypes’ of social categories. As it has been stated by Gorlach and Klekotko (2011: 29), “Certain subtypes of social categories such as children, women, etc. can create specific references to concrete places through storytelling, personal experience and private evaluations, rituals, thought processes, physical contact, sounds and even through silence.”

Various narratives ripe with meaning, while referring to particular places, usually connect them with issues of emotions and culture. Emotions are linked to a more general approach to social phenomena and processes of social construction. To some extent they are naturally connected with place as “an individual’s position vis-a-vis other positions in an encounter” (Turner, Stets 2005). Emotions and feelings are natural ingredients of human experience and thus can be observed in various social interactions and situations. Therefore, the processes of space socialisation, construction of place generate emotions.

Within this context, feelings and emotions are tied to the process of constructing memories that gives certain places specific meanings. Emotions are also entangled in the processes of understanding various questions, crucial to giving places special meanings. As has been presented in another article, emotions that appear within the context of perception and interpretation of ecological problems, environmental threats, animal rights and so on are worth mentioning (Smith, Davidson, Cameron, Boni, 2009).

Another way in which emotions mark their impact is through grieving or dealing with loss. This situation can be observed when actions appreciating traditions tied to certain place are undertaken or when environmentalists conduct operations and events meant to preserve some species of plants and animals. There is another way, in which emotions are present according to a scheme of ‘individual-people-society’ – and that is through belonging.

In one way or another all people “belong” to certain fragments of space. We are tied to a particular town or village through birth or residence. This connection may only be symbolic, when they are just members of the club or association grouping people in some way connected (through birth, through residence or perhaps through nothing more than pure sentiment) to a particular place (village, town, city, region etc.). The relationship with this place may simply be fulfilled through awe or enchantment. Such emo-

tions can hence take various directions and lead to some kind of fascination that may have its source in natural or social and cultural (or perhaps all of them combined) qualities of certain spaces (Klekotko, Gorlach 2011: 30–31).

The above remarks could obviously be stretched into a more detailed analysis of the concept of place. However, we would like to stress that our thoughts go in a different direction. We are interested in how the issues of space and locality can be arranged to fit the analysis of the processes of social transformation, namely processes of social development. To support this thought we propose a certain conclusion about the concept of ‘place’ which can be inferred from its numerous theories. Once the differences that can be observed in the aforementioned concepts of “place” are put aside, there is one thing they all seem to have in common.

Here, “place” becomes a context for a society affected by processes of globalisation with a special link between “locality,” understood as a set of certain physical characteristics, related to a certain fragment of space and a supra-local realm. Here, we mean references to values, meanings and actions located within the context of locality. We present the thesis that is often ambiguous for researchers and states that the problems regarding the relationship between locality and the place can be passed over if another term, which is already gaining importance in contemporary sociological discourse, is employed. This term is “glocalisation.”

We presented a vast, but not necessarily complete, review of various approaches to glocalisation, in another work (Klekotko 2012: 28–40, Klekotko, Gorlach 2011: 34–39). In the following essay, we are only attempting to reconstruct a certain model term that can be described as “glocal community”. The concept of “glocalisation” appeared in sociological literature thanks to Robertson (1992) and in Polish sociological literature it was introduced by Bauman (1997).

Disregarding the differences between these two concepts, let us focus for a moment on what they have in common. As pointed by Klekotko (2012), both concepts allude to the fact that changes and transformations occurring currently on the local level are greatly influenced by global phenomena and processes. This approach, which presents the impact of global issues as a unidirectional process, is not characteristic for other concepts that emphasise mutual influence or relations of reciprocation that occur between global and local processes.



Examples of this approach can be found in the writings of Robertson (1995), Khondker (2004), or Giddens (1992). For the first of these authors, localisation is a twofold process of “universalization of particularism and particularization of universalism” or – in other words – it involves moving certain local values or local meanings to the global level while, at the same time, global phenomena and processes break through to mark their presence on the local level. Khondker, on the other hand, in presenting similar processes, calls them macro- and micro-globalisation. Giddens goes even further stating that glocalisation is a process that leads to a certain renaissance of locality in globalised society.

The term “glocalization” is also used in a somewhat different sense. It is not so much an analytical concept meant to describe and explain various phenomena and social processes, but more of an applied project. In this perspective, locality refers to processes of the dynamic symmetry between the resources located in specific communities and societies and those on the supranational (global) level. This is how it can be described: “In short, the word “glocalisation” is meant to point to a strategy involving a substantial reform of the different aspects of globalisation, with the goal being both to establish a link between the benefits of the global dimension- in terms of technology, information and economics – and local realities, while, at the same time, establishing a bottom-up system for the governance of globalisation, based on greater equality in the distribution of the planet’s resources and on an authentic social and cultural rebirth of a disadvantaged population” (Nigro 2003: 13–14).

According to Klekotko (2012: 31–36), within the glocalisation concept three directional changes that local communities go through due to the processes of globalisation can be distinguished. The first one is described as a cosmopolitan scenario with its main feature described as the disappearance of what is locally specific. In other words, the local community dissolves into or blends with the globalised society. The second scenario can be described as fundamentalist backwardness of the local community that reacts to the processes of globalisation with various defense strategies. Finally, there is a third scenario describing the processes of constructing the new type of local community. All of these scenarios deserve a closer look.

The cosmopolitan scenario has some distinctive characteristics. First of all, it is due to the processes of globalisation that social diversity increases, which once was viewed as the path of development of mass society (Kle-



kotko 2012: 31–32, Klekotko, Gorlach 2011: 39–40). This process consists of several important and quite meaningful components. Here, we mean the very intensive flow of ideas, norms and values that on one hand can help participants of social life to form some kind of cognitive basis and on the other strengthen ties between particular actors.

In the process of modernisation, one that historically indicated the significance of the first breach in the traditional social system the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and institutionalisation. Globalisation enhances the tendency by, on one hand, intensifying the processes of mobilisation (mostly space mobilisation) and, on the other hand, emphasising the individual tendencies which take over territorial identifications and references to tradition. Sociologists hence try to analyse these processes and their expressions by elaborating the concepts of locality-deprived communities, personal communities (Starosta, 1995) or communities of interest (Starosta 2001). What is crucial here is the fact that particular territory described as space is no longer the basis for emerging social bonds. In this way the community is replaced by networks (Castells 2000). It can be stated that as the result of the processes mentioned above, we are moving from a society of communities to the network society.

The second scenario, described as “fundamental backwardness”, deals with a similar diagnosis of ongoing social processes related to modernization, but views their consequences in a dramatically different manner (Klekotko 2012: 32–33). The social changes and transformations are explained in a simplistic manner, while the atomisation and individualisation within society are perceived as having rather negative effects. Both of these processes result most of all in chaos and uncertainty in social relations and consequently lead to feelings of fear, lack of stability, increasing uncertainty, discomfort and even frustration experienced by various participants of social life.

One possible reaction is a specific return to the past. As we have already stated in another study, “The need to reconstruct a traditional local community that stands up for community values, social cohesion, and relative homogeneity as well as exclusive and self-sufficient type of social organisation is born. The new-old identity constructed this way should bring back the ontological sense as well as give a new meaning to social reality. However this scenario leads at the same time to marginalisation in contemporary, fast changing society, contributing to the emergence of

various “small nationalisms, escapist movements and xenophobic attitudes and behaviours” (Klekotko, Gorlach 2011: 40). Within this context terms such as “opposition communities” (Starosta 2001), or “destructive Gemeinschaft,” (Sennett 1992) “return to origins,” (Wnuk-Lipiński 2004) “narrow nationalism,” (Beck, 2005) or just “fundamentalism” (McMichael, 2004) are bound to appear.

Finally we are ready to describe the third scenario (Klekotko 2012: 33–40). It shows that local communities can still exist in a contemporary globalised society but, of course, not in their traditional form. A variety of terms such as “inclusive” (Etzioni 2001), potential (Starosta 1995), modernised (Komendera 1995) or communitarian communities (Rubin, Rubin 2001) could be employed here (see also: Tam 1998; Woods 2006). We have already seen the tendency for emergence of additional terms in the second scenario, but the terms that appear in the third and final scenario are directly opposed to those of the previous scenario. Rather than provide a detailed description of these concepts, we will take a rather careful look at the characteristics of a “new local community”, which distinguish them from traditional ones (Klekotko 2012: 33–40).

The first of these characteristics describes local communities in the contemporary world as open communities. This means that in order to continue their existence and development they must be able to use the opportunities brought by globalisation to their advantage. Within this context, mobilisation processes play a rather significant role. Concentration on a particular goal and orientation on well-defined tasks make a foundation for forming and maintaining bonds and social relations between people who constitute the contemporary local community.

In some ways, local communities can be compared to social movements, due to their ephemeral nature. At the same time, if they are oriented towards achieving some practical goal, they are at least able to provide testimony in reference to certain ideas or values. In many ways, they could be defined as task-based communities. Within new local communities, a certain dominance of the public realm in the area of their functioning and actions undertaken can be observed. They are not based on tradition or any kind of community originating in neighborhood but become some kind of community of preferences, hobbies or even a community of interest. This brings about a new understanding of the space aspect within the local realm. It must not be treated much as a traditionally communal area but rather as



a territory where certain norms, values, rules or laws are respected. As we have written in another piece of work, “What matters in local communities of the new type is not tight friendship between neighbours but functional proximity related to planned and anticipated achievement of previously defined goals” (Klekotko, Gorlach 2011: 42).

The new local communities can be characterised by a new type of social bond. Before we examine this characteristic further, we should mention that in this case bonds lose their special importance and distinctiveness. It can be stated that bonds within new local communities are not especially different from other forms of coexistence within society. They resemble voluntary associations or communities of functional proximity more than traditional local communities, where participation was not so much a result of an act of individual subjective decision but occurred through the fact of being born in a certain family or rooted in a particular neighborhood.

Local communities of the new type appear mostly within the public realm, which also influences the character of existing bonds. They are not meant to impose control over every aspect of human life but are more focused on civic engagement observed within the public realm. However, within this context we feel obligated to mention the processes of publicising or even moving certain issues from the private sphere – that, for the most part, remains protected from external control – to the public realm, where various private or even intimate aspects of social life are scrutinised. Within this context we can identify issues such as family violence or the individual right to disclose sexual orientation with expectations of tolerance. These issues are important, and deserve attention, but they are not the main topic of this paper.

After the above arguments, we feel legitimately prepared to present and defend the thesis that “The idea of civil society is a foundation for the model of local community of the new type.” The public realm, where this community exists provides the area for civil activities, is understood in this instance as a combination of engaged people and institutions, who take responsibility for functioning of the community, not just in the present moment but also with having future generations in mind. It may be stated that the local community of the new type appreciates the significance of civic participation in actions taken for its development (Klekotko, Gorlach 2011: 43). Let us remember this statement because it will serve as a reference point for matters discussed in the following work.



Let us linger for a moment on the topic of relations between new local community and civil society. Not everything that is going on in a local community is an expression of civil society, as chats by the church, beer drinking in a local bar (or by local convenience store) do not really belong in that category. Even harvesting in a rural community, which once meant working together within that community, has become more solitary and less engaging on the local level. This does not mean that harvests are no longer visible in the contemporary Polish countryside but in many communities, harvesting has been removed from the rural spotlight. It relates to the process of removal of agriculture from rural economy, landscape and the lifestyle of rural inhabitants.

Even in places where harvesting does take place and will continue to take place, its character has changed. It is no longer an event of communal work, but operations performed by highly specialised workers who have highly sophisticated farm equipment and, in addition to taking care of their own farms, provide service to other residents of the village. The research conducted at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century on random samples of individual farm owners in Poland has shown a dramatic decrease in farm work based on reciprocity among neighbors (Gorlach 2009). In this sense, “old” local communities become no more than local communities affected by processes of modernisation and globalisation. Hence, these processes currently support the emergence of a peculiar reintegration, wherein local communities take forms of civil associations that base their functioning on openness to the outside world and inclusive character of social relations.

As pointed out by Klekotko (2012), local communities of the new type become the actors of the changes and subjects of various development concepts, thanks to their abilities to mobilise their own social and cultural resources (such as citizens’ participation, ability to cooperate, etc.). These concepts present a rather diverse logic and reflect specific arrangements of global and local forces that communities break in order to become communities of the new types. This developmental logic and the balance of forces determine the real impact of the community on social reality and its development potential.

### **Global and local thinking and actions – various scenarios**

Here, we would like to get back to our main idea of inverting the popular slogan of thinking globally and acting locally into the combination of local thought and global actions. In our opinion, the new local communities defined here are the ones that have developed the ability to support local ideas and initiatives with more global action strategies happening on the national and supranational levels. As we have discussed earlier, the empowerment of citizens through authentic and full participation is a key to good understanding of relations between the global and the local.

Various outcomes are possible, depending on the type of actions that actors engage in and the level of social organisation where they are taking place. The stages of the development process also play a role here. Only some possible outcomes would be recognised as true participation by Hickey and Mohan (2004), while others would be met with their charges of “tyranny.” Let us now take a look at these various scenarios and their exemplification.

The “think globally and act locally” slogan is usually used in the modernisation discourse; hence, we are critical of its one-dimensional implication. In this concept, the participation of local actors is usually moved to the final part of the change process; namely, to the implementation stage. The slogan itself is about subscribing to global ideas and implementing them locally.

This type of thinking, as we have previously emphasised, has its justification in the actions of the ecological movement and is reflected in recycling and pollution reduction programs. When applied on the grounds of developmental policy, grand modernisation projects usually omit the role of local resources, forgetting the importance of local knowledge and disregarding local potential. Such projects may even appear morally dubious, if they do not lead to the empowerment of local people.

In fact, quite a few contemporary aid and developmental programs have some characteristics of the described approach. Here, we mean all cases of ‘grasping opportunities’ when ‘opportunities’ are created through operational programs by officials who do not have a good sense of local needs. Being that these ‘opportunities’ already exist, local communities decide to take advantage of them and participate in a development programme that,



in the long run, may turn out to be against their real interests. What comes to mind then are that large sports facilities in rural and semi-rural areas, co-financed by EU money that did not awaken any passion for sports or healthy lifestyles.

Most of these facilities are not used by local inhabitants as there are no sports instructors or coaches paid by local government to share their experience and knowledge with local people. Moreover, the maintenance of sports infrastructure often becomes a significant burden to local budgets. The threats related to this approach were mentioned by Adamski (2008), who analysed the LEADER programme functioning in rural areas and activities of Local Action Groups in the municipalities of Malopolska. The author argued that the projects carried out within the LEADER framework rarely fulfilled the real needs of local community, and only met the goals imposed by certain financial instruments.

The communities have tried their best to 'fit in' with the strategies, principles and goals of these 'global' programmes, created somewhere 'above' in order to receive funds. As can be inferred, this way of thinking can lead to dependence on external and extra-local resources and therefore encourage clientele relations at the supra-local level. It also legitimises the dominance of global interests and forces a global narrative upon local definitions of development.

**Think locally and act locally** is thus an example of a twofold activity that originates in local needs (problems and challenges), makes use of local resources and is conducted in the local arena via social participation. This scenario is based on thinking that one must take care of himself or herself, as no one else will do it. Such an approach requires local capacity building and reintegration of the community in the public space. In this way, a local community of the new type is created and is able to thrive, dealing with challenges and threats of the contemporary world, continuing its further development.

Such a case has been provided by Klekotko in her study of the mechanism of community development in a global context (Klekotko 2012). The author stresses the role of various types of capital in the processes of human development; namely, the social and the cultural, as well as institutional. Klekotko pays particular attention to the process of "capitalization of culture." She explains how local culture – tradition, cultural policy and political culture – transforms into development assets, strengthens



the local political process and favours empowerment and community development.

The processes described here were based on local resources and actions were taken locally, according to self-reliance community development ideals. Nevertheless, this did not mean autarchy and de-linking from external forces. In fact, the community was able to accept and adapt external values or resources, although they were always “filtered” by local needs and goals. The actions, however, were always locally-oriented and locally-supported. In the case of the Radzionków community, the think locally–act locally approach to development turned out to be quite successful, yet one should also be aware that it may also significantly limit advantages of globalisation and may result in community marginalisation.

**In the third scenario, think globally – act globally** could well be exemplified by farmers who, aware of the principles of the global game (i.e. Common Agricultural Policy), take the challenge and use available resources, mobilising them in order to be a player on the supra-local level – and that may include the global arena. This is well illustrated in the famous work of Van der Ploeg’s (2003) entitled *The Virtual Farmer*. In this scenario, farmers are the winners benefitting from globalisation and their actions are neither connected to “place” nor are they “local”.

Instead, these activities are driven by individual and individualistic rationality and deprived of local context. The local community is hardly present in these actions, being that the dimension of communal participation is not obvious. What takes place is not really rooted in locality, for the distinctiveness of local culture, tradition and knowledge is diluted here. This model hence carries a serious threat related to the dominance of economic rationality, while the business approach and a rather instrumental treatment of the local community. An exclusion of the groups that do not respond to the market logic thus occurs, which consequently lose their empowerment as well as opportunities for development.

Finally, **the last scenario is think locally – act globally**. In all cases described thus far the problem of resource imbalance and limited participation could be observed with its implied threat to the empowerment of local systems. We will hence propose a re-formulation of this famous slogan, and consequently a change in thinking about development with local communities being a heart of this process. Although the impact of local communities on global decisions and processes is quite limited, it does

not mean that their abilities for 'global' action are limited to merely the actions and deeds of the most industrious individuals. Hence, overall, local systems are fated to remain passive participation in global programmes.

Global actions of local systems can be presented in two ways. First of all, they can be presented as cases of acquiring external sources of financing for local initiatives, mostly from EU funds or development programs, as well as obtaining knowledge or network resources (eg. participation in international networks or international exchange) to fulfil their own local goals. Here, we refer to global action not only because the financial means (or other resources) come from "outside", including global institutions, as well as securing them requires familiarity with very specific procedures and knowing the way around the supra-local, as well as the global scene. Contrary to the "think globally – act locally" approach that was earlier criticised in this paper, the goals, needs and developmental problems in our modified approach are not defined by outsider parties. The actions taken are hence not limited to the act of joining the EU program or 'grasping opportunities,' as described earlier in this paper.

In a nation-wide study of selected local rural communities (gminas) (Nowak 2012), both the ideas and activities presented by members of local elites show the importance of extra-local factors and actors in the processes of development of rural gminas. The majority of members of local elites researched here have pointed out the external economic resources that might be useful in the processes of local changes. They should be combined in their opinions (Nowak 2012: 135–137) with some other resources, such as cultural and social capital, as well as a relatively high level of generalised trust among members of the researched elites. Such combination of internal capitals (social and cultural) with external ones (economic) forms a kind of successful starting point for the processes of local communities' developments. This finding shows that the gminas researched are on track for future changes based on the philosophy of the neo-endogenous pattern of human development.

Another example of global action stemming from a local thought that is quite proactive and not only receptive is branding of local produce and its preparation for global market. There are quite a few examples of local products, whose "locality" is officially confirmed by certificate of authenticity. In Poland, the case of "oscypek" cheese in the Podhale area is a good example (Adamski & Gorlach 2010), as described earlier in the



text. The efforts of acquiring funds from outside is often combined with the making of the “local brand”, that would also mark the presence of particular communities on international arena and attract tourists and investors.

What particularly comes to mind is the necessity to secure project funds from national ministries and other entities, as well as the European Union, for locally conducted projects that deal with cultural identities and local traditions. This endeavour usually requires extensive project preparations, following uniform procedures; namely adhering to national, European or, dare we say, global standards of doing things, well-coordinated actions on regional and even the global level. Two examples of such initiatives in Dąbrowa County in southern Poland were described by Witowska (2015).

The first one brought the peasant culture of the “painted village” in Zalipie back into the spotlight by promoting local art and craft and encouraging tourism. Locals do make sure that the art and craft of Zalipie is passed onto newer generations, as they are aware that the uniqueness of the village is its ticket to ensuring the residents’ quality of life. Hence, the souvenir business has flourished lately, mostly focusing on handicrafts. The village has been featured in tourist guides and advertised in local culture centers. Zalipie has become one of the better brands of Dąbrowa County.

The other initiative led to the thorough renovation of the Hasidic synagogue in Dąbrowa Tarnowska and its grand opening as the Center for the Meeting of Cultures, where Zalipie craft and art are exhibited. The Center for the Meeting of Cultures is the new name for an old building that used to be a synagogue from 1863 until World War II. The incidence of the war and the following years took their toll on the building and its deterioration continued for decades, despite the fact that, in 1989, it was officially recognised as a monument of local heritage of national importance (class A).

It was through local efforts and EU money that the building was renovated and repurposed as the Center for the Meeting of Cultures. Once again, a local need to save an architectural landmark brought about a global way of conducting a successful renovation project financed by EU entities through a regional programme. The result gives locals reason to feel connected to entities beyond the local level, as the place attracts people from all over Poland and from various places in the world, making the town more attractive globally. Locally, the potential of the centre to bring people together is also noticeable; the seniors active in the local branch

of Third Age University thus meet to discuss the lecture plans and other educational activities there.

The examples of external resource development of local systems presented here show that development can be constrained through – what we call – opportunity structure. These opportunities are not infinite and therefore the activities of a local system and the directions of development are limited due to the character of external resources. It is only through availability of local resources that local communities may reduce their dependency from external resources. In our view the logic of “act globally” should not be limited exclusively to global initiatives and actions. “Think locally, act globally” allows for synergy of local ideas and both local and global ways of doing things, use of local and global resources, making an impact on local matters and contributing to global initiatives. It allows for community building, strengthening its capacity and enhancing the empowerment and local development mechanisms.

What also matters is the use of global resources and engagement in activities within global structures. Participation of the local system encompasses all stages of the change with the conducted initiatives stemming from local needs rather than from the activities of government administrators, who mobilise the local community in their quest for EU funds. We think that such interpretation of “think locally, act globally” allows for full participation and fosters empowerment of local systems. The development mechanism that seems to be the closest to our desired model is the concept of neo-endogenous development, with its many elements also present in the sustainable development concept. Both concepts will be described later in this text.



**Table 1.** Global/Local thinking and acting – various scenarios

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Thinking</b> (ideas, development doctrines, reflexivity)	<b>Acting: scenes</b> (levels of social system)	<b>Acting: actors</b>	<b>Acting: resources</b>	<b>Idea:</b>	<b>Dangers / challenges:</b>
<b>Think globally – act locally</b>	Global	Local	Local implementers, global decision makers	Local, although they might be supported by global institutions (as long as global strategies are being implemented)	Implementation	Clientelism and domination of global interests and global (homogenous) reflexivity
<b>Think globally – act globally</b>	Global	Global	Local, with a significant (if not crucial) support of global institutions as policy-makers	Local, with significant support of global funding	Global competition	Domination of economic rationality, individualisation and instrumentalisation
<b>Think locally – act locally</b>	Local	Local	Local – self-reliance and community capacity building doctrine	Local – self-reliance and community capacity building doctrine	Self-reliance	Marginalisation
<b>Think locally – act globally</b>	Local	Global and local (glocal)	Local, although global experts might be included in projects	Local and global	Agency and participation	Opportunity structure, ensuring participation

*Source: own work*

### **Think locally – act globally. New approach to social development**

The present work does not pretend to go so far as to carefully analyse various concepts of social change or social development, as the authors are aware that the existing literature on the subject is quite extensive and helpful to a reader determined to make his or her own synthesis of it (Sztompka 1993, 2012, Pieterse 2010, McMichael). Considering this, and the length of the present paper, we would like to focus on two concepts that seem crucial to a thorough consideration of the dilemma of thinking and acting on a local and global scale. We believe that if this dilemma is presented in the right manner it may contain helpful suggestions to combine the concepts of neo-endogenous development and sustainable development.

As we argued in the introduction to this paper, the sustainable development approach might sometimes disempower community and thus make its real development impossible. We argue that only by combining sustainable development approach with neo-endogenous development concept, can one assure that “think locally, act globally” will come true and help communities to develop. The final part of the present essay is devoted to these two concepts, with one important reservation that they will be presented in a general manner, without addressing too many descriptive and analytical details. Hence, allow us just to signal their main theoretical premises and their vision of development and its mechanisms. Both of these concepts emphasise local issues, the problems of local communities and the problem of a place that is defined as home in a social space.

The idea of sustainable development is often associated with issues of the natural environment. The literature on the subject presents three perspectives. Firstly, the natural environment is one of the three pillars of the development concept, the other two being economic and social factors. Secondly, the idea of sustainable development can be found within the array of issues concerning economic development, social development and environmental protection. A focus on sustainability within the processes of change and transformation means that economic growth will be achieved with no significant destruction to the social tissue and no destruction of natural resources. Finally, there is a third approach to development, which considers environmental protection – understood as conservation of existing natural resources – as a determinant of sustainability. Economic and



social changes are here acceptable as long as they do not exceed a certain level of depletion of natural resources which are being utilised (Elliot 2013).

The general concept of sustainable development can be linked to a model of economic development which is friendly to the natural environment and to society to some (but less obvious an) extent. However, in the contemporary sociological literature the meaning of sustainable development is more complex. The enumeration of a special Decalogue for a sustainable society can serve as an example here (Cavanagh, Mander 2004). In our view, it contains the following: the principle of maintaining a participative democracy; the principle of subsidiarity; the need to preserve ecological balance and common heritage; substantive appreciation for diversity, human rights, job market protections, farm welfare and personal and food security, as well as a thoughtful assessment of the risks related to global development.

Contrary to critics' perceptions, this way of understanding participative democracy does not entail a state of permanent referendum carrying a significant risk of blocking any changes, but as a process of constructing structures of governance. In fulfilment of this network principle, a significant role is given to local subjects, local representatives and indigenous communities.

Another important principle is "subsidiarity". It promotes the idea of resistance towards appropriation of local resources and development perspectives by supra-local, or even global subjects currently dominating the power structure in the contemporary world. In some ways, it is a philosophy of positive thinking carrying a message that any decisions and actions which could be made or implemented at the local level should happen there. Thus, any center of authority which could be located at the local level should be placed there.

Within the Decalogue of sustainable development, the issues of ecological stability are particularly important. Some of these characteristics are emphasised as crucial to sustainable society. First of all, it is clearly stated that consumption of resources should not exceed their regeneration. Put simply, consumption should not go beyond abilities and capacities for renewal.

The next aspect of the concept discussed here is preservation of common heritage, which revolves around three facets. It is crucial to maintain resources such as water, soil, air, forests, sea and ocean habitat – namely,

everything that influences human life – with no damage or with as minimal damage as possible. This idea also encompasses the culture and knowledge accumulated by societies, as well as all public resources, the use of which is intended to foster the sense of personal and social security, as well as providing healthcare and enable the population to receive adequate level of education. The preservation of heritage is – in our opinion – closely related to the issue of diversity. What we mean here goes beyond biological diversity, which provides an adequate pool of various genes needed for the reproduction of plants and animals, to preserve their self-regulated and self-renewing ecosystems, but also cultural and economic diversity.

Development and changes affecting contemporary society relate to the issue of human rights. The traditional perspective on development, quite popular in Western societies, has concentrated somewhat narrowly on political and civil rights. The issues of procedural democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the like have hence been emphasised. The idea of sustainable development goes beyond that, highlighting the economic, cultural and social aspects of these rights and, at the same time, proclaiming some of these rights to be fundamental. Among these elements are: access to safe food and water, the right to preservation of tradition, social and cultural identity, the right to the social safety net and a dignified standard of living.

The concept of sustainable development is often associated with the idea of equity contesting the effects of globalization, leading to income disparities on a global scale and in particular societies. The disparities are not just between “rich” and “poor” but also between men and women, corporate mega-farms and relatively small family farms, and ethnic groups that play a dominant role in given societies and immigrants. Income gaps and examples of social injustice which start there are the reason why special attention is given to the precautionary principle within the concept of sustainable development. The paradigm of sustainability places certain demands on innovations brought by development processes. Such innovations should carefully undergo early evaluation for the potential benefits and drawbacks which they may have – both globally and for the societies implementing them.

We are convinced that aforementioned rules and ideals of Decalogue for sustainable development are the indispensable conditions for community empowerment and thus, as such, its “real”, just and inclusive development.



However, these rules and ideals can only be implemented through specific developmental mechanisms, which are also described in the related concept of neo-endogenous development. The most comprehensive and clear presentation of neo-endogenous development can – in our opinion – be found in the articles of Ray (1999, 2006: 278–291, cf. Klekotko 2012: 61–65). The concept of development is founded in his opinion on two premises.

On the one hand, there is an endogenous element according to which the development processes must be based on local initiative and be related to an approach known from academic literature and social practice as a *bottom-up approach*. The “neo” component – according to Ray – indicates that extra-local factors must play a vital role in the development process. It is not feasible, as Ray emphasises, to guarantee integrated development at the local level by cutting local communities off from the outside world, which some extreme concepts of endogenous rural development seem to propose (Krzysztofek, Szczepański 2002).

The neo-endogenous approach to development has two primary characteristics. First, the activities that occur in rural areas in pursuit of economic development are reoriented to maximise the retention of benefits within the local territory, which happens by valorising and exploiting local resources, including physical resources and human resources. Second, the activities that lead to development are – to use Ray’s (2006: 278) wording – contextualised by focusing on the needs, capacities, and life perspective of local people. Here, the principle and process of local participation in the design and implementation of developmental practices, as well as adoption of cultural, environmental and ‘community’ values, are being emphasised here. This perspective relates to the rhetoric of local areas assuming a significant influence over their own future through the use of local resources, as mentioned above, and through constructing mechanisms of lasting development, often initiated by the external stimulus.

While discussing the foundations and characteristics of neo-endogenous development, Ray (1999, 2006) reveals what are quite general and interrelated conceptual approaches that can be defined as social economy, economic coordination and multi-level governance. The first one indicates the necessity to view economic processes with a particular social context in mind. Therefore, all initiatives and plans related to economic changes or economic development must in all cases recognise the local context, the needs of residents, and also be able to predict possible effects of the activities

taken. Economic coordination is meant to prevent negative consequences of modern, global capitalism, such as lack of solidarity, degradation of the natural environment and culture. It also emphasises construction of the principles of mutuality, redistribution and market exchange, which should be conducted in the interest of local communities. Therefore, this territorial rather than sectorial aspect becomes a crucial component of the concept of neo-endogenous development. Multi-level governance means considering various actors, both local and extra-local, functioning within the network, where debates and decisions on making and implementing development policies take place.

Ray (2006) proposes a perspective of territory in the research on neo-endogenous development. Here, concrete perspectives should be mentioned: intra-territorial; territorial in the politically-administrative context; and inter-territorial. In the first instance, researchers focus on reconstruction of elements like the territorial manner of production, strategically territorial types of activity, the role and meaning of social capital, the forms of partnership, and the functioning of bodies that produce decisions related to development. The territorial perspective in the politico-administrative context then indicates the need to analyse all local development initiatives as a chain of political and administrative dependencies with the crucial role of the administration of nation-states and larger supranational structures (i.e. European Union). Here, evaluative processes that make an integral part of development policies play a crucial role.

Finally, the inter-territorial perspective places an emphasis on relations between particular territorial units which are arenas of development. They should bring lasting connections and they can take various forms and carry on various contents. Moreover, they may or may not be limited to the flow of goods and consumers, or they can become a channel that carries certain values, cultural contents, and matters which facilitate building the awareness of participation in a larger economic, social and cultural system. Hence, processes of regulation and the mutual “learning” of various methods of operation and application of practical solutions may also be present.

## Conclusions

The concepts of neo-endogenous development and sustainable development are closely related. Some time ago, the thesis of neo-endogenous



development as a sustainable development mechanism was quite popular. Today, we would like to reformulate this thesis. Of course, the concept of neo-endogenous development (for the purpose of this paper we follow the definition coined by Ray) presents a certain development mechanism with a specific way of linking local to global issues – or “extra-local”, to use Ray’s own term. The anticipated changes at the local level depend on moving the use of local resources, as well as actors and agents that go beyond the local level, while fostering relations between various local units and extra-local (global) level. Traditional actors from the politico-administrative realm (i.e., the state and its various institutions, but also movements, organisations and associations) also play a rather significant role in the functioning of this mechanism.

Here, the concept of sustainable development can be treated as an idea of much richer content than the concept of neo-endogenous redevelopment. If we evoke “the Decalogue of sustainable society”, we may be able to find two kinds of elements, or even two kinds of “commandments”, if we use the figure of speech proposed by Cavanagh and Mander. The commandments of the first type, just like in the concept of neo-endogenous development, relates to various elements of development mechanism: rules for new participant democracy, a principle of subsidiarity, respect for human rights and the precautionary principle (foreseeing and preventing possible negative consequences of the implementation of development projects).

The other types of commandments of sustainable development emphasise the values that must be addressed and fulfilled within this mechanism. They deal with issues of ecological balance, preservation of local heritage, diversity and employment (work, welfare), as well as equality and social justice. The development mechanism, which is designed to ensure the fulfillment of values mentioned above, is based on the need to view local specificity as crucial to participation in the formation and implementation of certain policies by many actors, ensuring their mutual cooperation, support and assurances. In our opinion, the local factor appears within this context, but not so much as a recipient of “global” (or supra-local) projects as an outright participant in the governance process. Therefore, the game of changes on the local level plays out, most of all, on the global level, benefitting from outright participation from and representation of the former.

It is our understanding that both the development mechanisms presented here are contrary to a widespread statement “Think Globally, Act Locally.” The idea of neo-endogenous development appreciates the use of local resources and cooperation with extra-local actors, while the idea of sustainable development emphasises preservation of local distinctiveness during the process of broad participation, from various actors adhering to the principles of subsidiarity and precaution in assessing possible negative phenomena. Both of them prove the usefulness of the thesis about the need to supplement thinking locally with activities oriented towards the extra-local and even the global. Hence, this combination of thought and action alone is a key to success. It is, in our view, the right time to introduce the principle of “Think Locally, Act Globally” to the discourse on the principles and processes of development in contemporary globalised society.

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